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The third Paper read was—

3. *Expedition in South Australia.* By SIR RICHARD M'DONNELL, C.B.,
and Major R. WARBURTON.

HIS EXCELLENCY the Lieut.-Governor, Sir R. M'Donnell, started with a large party to inspect the newly-explored districts north of Mount Serle, and the result of his experience showed that there was greater difficulty in finding feed for his horses in the settled districts south of Angipena than anywhere else in his entire journey. He first inspected numerous mines, including the Appealina, Chambers', and Finch's, and the copper-mine near Mount Rose; then he started upon the more adventurous part of his journey, suffering everywhere from the extreme drought of the season. His course lay by Lake Weatherstone, Mount Attraction Springs, Blanche Cup, and Strangway Springs. These latter are nearly 100 in number, and are mostly formed on the same type as Blanche Cup: that is to say, they consist of stony mounds with reeds at the top and a hollow basin in the centre, containing water of a depth varying from a few inches to 6 feet, which either overflows the brim or issues from its side in a stream proportionate to the strength of the supplying spring. The water of Strangway Springs was abundant enough, but slightly brackish and ill-calculated to quench thirst. Here the party suffered severely from illness, originating previously, but developed by the intense heat. Nevertheless, they determined to push on still further to Loddon Springs, guided only by a sketch-map of Mr. Stuart, which that gentleman had lent to his Excellency. This attempt led the party into serious danger; for after 45 miles' travel across a succession of sand-hills and other difficult country, they could not for a long time discover the waters of which they were in search, and which they lighted upon only at the last moment, when they were on the point of undertaking the serious hazard of a retreat, with utterly exhausted men and cattle. His Excellency still continued his route to the interior for three days farther, when, having been absent long from the colony, his provisions failing, and an accident having happened to one of his best horses, he reluctantly returned, and riding in long and rapid stages reached Adelaide in safety.

Major Warburton travelled from Fowler's Bay to the head of the great Australian bight, the neighbourhood of which he explored with very discouraging results. "There is indeed abundant water among the sand-hills at the head of the bight, but hardly any is to be found elsewhere. He therefore pronounces the country west-

wards of Fowler's Bay as unfitted for occupation. He came upon Eyre's tracks, but found difficulty in identifying that traveller's positions, chiefly owing to an uncertainty as to the exact point which Eyre had considered to be the head of the bight. Major Warburton's explorations were carried on with so much toil that his exhausted party had difficulty in returning.

THE CHAIRMAN, in commenting on this communication, adverted to the energy displayed by the Governor, Sir R. M'Donnell, in his endeavour to satisfy himself, by personal examination, of the real state of large portions of the interior of S. Australia. He then called on the Fellows present who took an interest in either of the great colonies adverted to, to offer their comments.

MR. CRAWFURD believed that the colony of Queensland was capable of producing cotton for Manchester. They had more cotton in Lancashire than all the rest of the world, but they must have still more to satisfy their demands. Queensland really seemed to be adapted for the production of cotton; but unfortunately the climate was also adapted for the cultivation of the sugar-cane, and that might be a serious rival. As to the production of cotton, it was one of the plants that required but a small quantity of water; it was, in fact, what was called a dry-land product, and he had no doubt that the country would be found well adapted to its growth. He thought they had now sufficient evidence to show that the great mass of Australia was a mere desert, and he did not see how it could be otherwise. Different exploring parties had penetrated so far from the south and from the north, that one or other of those parties must have seen a range of mountains in the interior, if any such existed, of 7000 or 8000 feet in height; and as they had not, it must be concluded that mountains of that character did not exist. Yet without them there could be no water, and without water there could be nothing but sterility. Such was the case in every part of the world. Wherever such ranges existed water was always found, and water in the tropics meant fertility. India, for instance, would be a desert if it were not for its range of mountains. With respect to Queensland, he could not believe that it was as good a place for sheep as had been represented, as he thought the climate would be too hot. Queensland was in the latitude of Canton, and Canton was much too hot for sheep. However, of all the places he knew, he believed it was the most eminently adapted for the production of cotton. He had himself seen samples from there both raw and manufactured, and he had scarcely seen better specimens of either. What it would produce to the greatest advantage would most probably be that which was called sea-island; and a very considerable quantity of that fine kind of cotton from Georgia and South Carolina was used by our manufacturers. He considered that the samples from Queensland were quite equal to any he had seen.

J. BAKER, Esq., a member of the Legislative Council of Australia, said he should not have ventured to address any observations to the meeting, if it had not been for the remarks of Mr. Crawford that the centre of Australia was a desert. Now he differed entirely from Mr. Crawford, as he thought it was proved, by the late explorations of Mr. Stuart, that such was not the fact; and he should not be doing his duty to the country which he claimed as his home, if he listened to the statement without attempting to refute it. It appeared to him that the paper from Sir Richard M'Donnell had been the immediate cause of Mr. Crawford making his observations, recounting as it did the hardships Sir Richard M'Donnell had to endure, and the difficulties with which he had to contend. But Sir Richard M'Donnell was not a practised

explorer. He started with Mr. Stuart's maps in his pocket, but he lost his way, and, travelling round the wrong side of Lake Tibbs, missed the Hermit range, for which he was aiming. Being disappointed in the water which was represented as existing in that neighbourhood, he examined Mr. Stuart's chart, and found the Hermit range with abundance of water by it. He (Mr. Baker) therefore thought it was not right to condemn the whole country as a desert, merely because Sir Richard M'Donnell had lost his way and had difficulties. There was no doubt that Sir Richard M'Donnell was entitled to great praise, and also to their sympathy for the hardships which it was represented he had had to endure; but what Sir Richard M'Donnell called fatigue and privation would very likely not be noticed at all by a man like Mr. Stuart, to whose labours he thought this Society could not award too high a medal of commendation. Mr. Stuart had himself said that much of the interior of Australia was quite equal in fertility and in rich picturesque beauty to the O'Halloran Hills, which were as lovely a part of country as could be seen. A great portion was under cultivation, producing all the cereals in the most luxuriant manner; and he thought the safety with which the exploring parties had made and returned from their expeditions to the interior proved that the country was not a desert. He, however, by no means meant to say that the whole of the vast interior would ever be profitable to work or hold. The banks of the river Darling, and much of the splendid tract of country through which it passed, were also as well adapted as the fertile plains of Queensland for the production of cotton. He considered that a few thousand pounds expended on the river, in the erection of four or five lock-gates, would not be thrown away, as it would render navigable upwards of 1000 miles of water, along the course of which there was a deposit of soil equal in rich abundance and luxuriance to that of the valley of the Nile, and capable of producing an immense quantity of cotton. If they thought their thanks were due to Sir Richard M'Donnell, what would they have to say with regard to Mr. Stuart? He contended that Mr. Stuart had already accomplished a victory, and was entitled to all the praise the Society could bestow upon him, even if he should die in the attempt to complete his discoveries in Australia.

LORD ALFRED CHURCHILL said he did not think his friend Mr. Baker had at all overrated the advantages of Australia as a fertile and good cotton-growing country, but these were especially great in respect to the new district of Queensland. With regard to the immediate products of Australia, which were so necessary for the manufacturers of this country, he scarcely knew any of them that were capable of being obtained more readily, and in larger quantities, than in the colony of Queensland. Australia now supplied 50,000,000 lbs. of wool a-year, and he had not the least doubt that, if the colonists took up the question of cotton-growing, they would do equally well with it. He certainly did not think, from what he had heard, that Queensland was at all too hot for sheep. The alpaca or llama of South America had now been introduced, and the animals appeared to thrive very well indeed. There was every reason to believe that important experiment would be successful; and if it should be so, flocks of those animals would add another and most profitable branch to colonial industry. There could be no doubt, from all the evidence they had heard, that immense tracts of country were pre-eminently fitted for the cultivation of cotton; and, in fact, there were few parts of Australia in which it could not be cultivated. The explorations of Mr. F. Gregory, on the northern and western side of Australia, were likely to be very beneficial in opening out new country whence more cotton could be obtained, and where cooley labour might be introduced for its cultivation. He thought the Society should do all in its power to encourage explorations of this nature.

MR. B. W. GEE said he had been some eight or nine years in Australia, and he could fully support the statements made by Mr. Baker. He had been

both in Calcutta and Queensland, so that he could judge of the relative merits of the two climates, and the advantages were incomparably in favour of the latter. The climate was unusually healthy, and the vegetation luxuriant beyond description. He had himself received honourable mention from the Commissioners of the Paris Exhibition for his samples of Australian cotton grown at Queensland, and he therefore knew what the young colony could do in respect to that cultivation. However, cotton required labour; and though he was an advocate for free, he was obliged to admit that convicts would do much more work in cotton plantations than any labourers whom the settlers could now obtain in the colony. He believed that if, under proper regulations and arrangements, convicts were sent to Queensland for ten years, there would be cotton enough coming from that district alone to supply all Manchester.

MR. CHILDERS, M.P., thought they owed a deep debt of gratitude to Mr. Crawford for eliciting the statement which had been made by Mr. Baker. He advocated the introduction of cotton plantations into Australia.

CAPTAIN DUCANE considered that, with respect to Western Australia, the expedition of Mr. Gregory was one of great hope, and, if successful, would be productive of great advantages.

MR. ROE, Surveyor-General of Western Australia, thought it a matter of great congratulation to the Society which had originated, fostered, and now brought to a successful issue, the expedition which he hoped had already started under their able leader Mr. Frank Gregory, who, he was certain, would do full justice to the task he had undertaken.

The CHAIRMAN congratulated the Society upon the discussion which had taken place. As to the observations in reference to Sir Richard M'Donnell and Mr. Stuart, he considered that no comparison had been drawn between them. No one had ever doubted that Mr. Stuart was entitled to the highest praise, and no one had stated this more decisively than Sir Richard M'Donnell himself.

4. *Latest Intelligence from the Expedition to the Sources of the Nile under Captains SPEKE and GRANT.*

THE intelligence from Captain Speke is of a fortnight later date than that which has already been communicated to the Society. It informs us that he had reached the upland districts, but had not yet arrived at the Rubeho Pass. All of his Hottentot guard had suffered severely from fever, and three of them had to be sent back invalided to Zanzibar. The rest of the party appear to be well.

Captain Speke sends back numerous lunar observations for the determination of the longitude of Zungomero, and speaks of having despatched an herbarium of plants.

The Meeting then adjourned to April 22nd.